


September 2014

Aquinas on Inclusion: Using the Good Doctor and Catholic Social Teaching to Build a Moral Case for Inclusion in Catholic Schools for Children with Special Needs

Mary Carlson

Marquette University, mary.carlson@marquette.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce>

 Part of the [Other Education Commons](#), [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Carlson, M. (2014). Aquinas on Inclusion: Using the Good Doctor and Catholic Social Teaching to Build a Moral Case for Inclusion in Catholic Schools for Children with Special Needs. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 18 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.1801042014>

This Article is brought to you for free with open access by the School of Education at Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for publication in *Journal of Catholic Education* by the journal's editorial board and has been published on the web by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information about Digital Commons, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu. To contact the editorial board of *Journal of Catholic Education*, please email CatholicEdJournal@lmu.edu.

Aquinas on Inclusion: Using the Good Doctor and Catholic Social Teaching to Build a Moral Case for Inclusion in Catholic Schools for Children with Special Needs

Mary Carlson
Marquette University

This article discusses the present status of students with disabilities in Catholic schools. It then builds the case, based upon the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and Catholic Social Teaching, that Catholic Schools, to remain true to Church teachings, must offer special educational services. The article concludes with recommendations for research and practice related to inclusion in Catholic schools.

Keywords

Aquinas, Catholic social teaching, inclusion, Catholic schools, students with special needs

In the theological tradition of prophetic witness—in lay terms, what one might call speaking truth to power—some thinkers are pointing to what seems to be a conflict between Christian theological ethics (which includes Catholic Social Teaching) and certain ethical practices in U.S. Catholic schools. Since “the aim of ...research...is to engage in a conversation with those who may not be eager to change their minds, but who, for good reasons, will,” (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995, p. x), I hope to convince Catholic school leaders (and the Archdiocesan officials who sponsor them), through application of Christian theological ethics and Catholic Social Teaching (hereafter, CST), that it is imperative that they offer inclusive services for children diagnosed with special needs. In order to make a more compelling case for those who might find the more modern emphasis of Christian theological ethics less than convincing, this paper will use several of the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, (a Doctor of the Church) which are often quoted in the official letters and encyclicals of the Church hierarchy.

The first section of the paper will briefly summarize the status of special education in Catholic schools. The second section will present a brief summary of the tenets of CST, its legitimacy of application to inclusive edu-

cation in Catholic schools, and the criticism of one type of Christian theological ethics often used when supporting disability rights, liberation theology. The third section will explore in greater depth the Thomistic teachings upon which the arguments in this paper are based.

The State of Special Education in Catholic Schools

The U.S. Department of Education's Report, *The Condition of Education 2013*, released by the National Council for Education Statistics estimated that over 13% of U.S. students require special education services (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Rathburn, Wang, & Zhang, 2013). However, a preliminary review of the literature indicates that most Catholic schools do not offer a range of services (hereafter referred to, interchangeably, as inclusive services and special education/al services) for students diagnosed with special (or exceptional) needs. Also, there is not a great deal of literature about what has been historically, or is currently, being offered. While there is a growing body of literature calling for more inclusive services (Scanlan, 2009) a search found fewer than 20 references written in the past 25 years that specifically address the issues of how many children are being served in U.S. Catholic schools. *The Condition of Education 2013* Report states that 95% of students diagnosed with disabilities are in public schools, and roughly 1% are in private schools; the remainder mostly attend specialized schools (Aud et al., 2013). DeFiore reported in 2006 that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) grouped 7% of the Catholic School population as having "learning disabilities"¹ (DiFiore, 2006, p. 454). Thus, even the most optimistic statistics indicate that Catholic schools are providing services for, at most, only roughly half of the percentage of students who are diagnosed with special needs.

Catholic Social Teaching and Application to Offering Inclusive Services

The tenets of CST are radically inclusive, based largely upon Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of Heaven (also called the Reign of God, The Reign of Heaven, the Kingdom of God, or in Greek, *Basileia*), such as the Sermon on the Mount (e.g., Matt 5:1-12) and the Last Judgment (e.g., Matt

¹ There are numerous reasons why these figures differ so widely, and the purpose of this summary is not to examine or explain the differences, but to point out both the dearth of services and the dearth of research on inclusive services offered in Catholic schools

25: 31-46). According to the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 2014), there are seven basic themes of CST:

1. A consistent ethic of life, with a commitment to love each person (made in the image and likeness of God), at each stage of life, according to her/his human dignity;
2. The right of all to participate in family, community and social/political/religious life in order to reach the full flourishing of their humanity;
3. The duty of Catholics to seek the common good, to make sure that the “things required for decency” and basic human rights are assured to all;
4. A preferential option for the poor, based on the idea from Matthew’s gospel (Mt 25: 31-46) that we will be judged on how we treated the “least” in this world;
5. The right to work and the rights of workers to be treated with dignity, to form associations, and to enjoy wages and benefits which ensure a decent standard of living;
6. Solidarity, or the commitment to stand with all in the world for peace and justice; and,
7. The stewardship of all of God’s creation.

CST is a body of teaching, which, while heavily dependent on sacred Scripture, is largely encapsulated in papal encyclicals and letters dating back to 1891 and in letters from various Catholic bishops’ conferences. Those, in turn, are based upon Scripture and magisterial teachings (those teachings by theologians of the past, including Aquinas’, which are accepted as part of Church doctrine). Although CST is a relatively large body of teaching, it is only a subset of Christian theological ethics, which also includes the work of Catholic theologians (and sometimes theologians from other faith traditions), not all of which are part of official Church teaching. In sum, CST might be called officially Church-sanctioned teaching on social issues.

One might ask how CST is relevant to the issue of offering inclusive services in Catholic schools. As Brady (2008) observed in considering appropriate responses to societal problems, “Catholics have formed parallel institutions that provide services,” and “that advocate for the poor or marginalized in society” (pp. 44-45). So, if the Church creates parallel institutions (such as hospitals and schools) to meet social needs, those institutions must serve the people most in need. Simply pointing out to others the need for services (in

this case, special educational services) is not enough. In the apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), Pope Paul VI issued a call to action:

It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action...The Church invites all Christians to take up a double task of inspiring and innovating in order to make structures evolve so as to adapt them to the real needs of today. (no. 48)

In that same letter, Paul VI exhorted readers to honor the need in all persons for equality and participation as expressions of God-given human dignity and freedom. “While progress has been made inscribing these two aspirations in deeds and structures, various forms of discrimination continually reappear” (Brady, 2008, p. 149). In an earlier document, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), which arose from Vatican Council II, Paul VI affirmed the dignity of all persons, each of whom are created in the “image of God” (Gen. 1:27) and share the same nature and origin:

Every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural...is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s will...Although rightful differences exist between men, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. (no. 29)

Thus, CST, particularly in its first three themes regarding the dignity of persons, the right to full participation, and the responsibility to seek the common good, is an appropriate body of teaching to reference. Special education in Catholic schools embodies a societal need for the common good in an area where the Church has created parallel institutions, and recognition of human dignity through participation.

CST and Liberation Theology are both part of Christian theological ethics. Liberation theology has been particularly useful in other writings examining the question of inclusion in Catholic schools as a hermeneutic lens to look at perceived institutional injustices. Liberation theologians originally began in the 1970s to address societal and institutional inequalities in South America by looking through the eyes of the poor and downtrodden (Brady, 2008). One of the causes of injustice pointed to by liberation theologians was

a lack of representation (hence, of participation) of marginalized groups in decision-making bodies or institutional structures. For instance, one sometimes inadvertent reason that discrimination occurs against the disabled (and against other marginalized groups) is that those who are marginalized are not always among those who establish policies. While the Catholic bishops of the United States issued a pastoral statement in 1978, reaffirmed in 1988 and expanded in 1995 (USCCB, 1978/1995) addressing the dignity, needs, and rights of those with disabilities, the language used does not necessarily reflect the current sensibility of language used in light of the Disability Rights Movement. Even this paper uses the scriptural term “the least among us” to justify inclusion.² In their pastoral statement, even though the intention is to be caring and to provide service, the use of “case” below might be taken to refer to persons rather than situations:

In the course of making pastoral decisions, it is inevitable that pastoral care workers will encounter difficult cases. Dioceses are encouraged to establish appropriate policies for handling such cases which respect the procedural and substantive rights of all involved, and which ensure the necessary provision of consultation. (NCCB/USCCB, 1995 General Principles, no. 7)

While liberation theologies are especially useful when examining issues such as the language used when dealing with people who might be considered among “the least,” these theologies have come under criticism from some in the Catholic hierarchy. The main areas of criticism regard a view by the Vatican that these theologies place more emphasis on the removal of earthly burdens than the burdens of one’s soul and the perception that liberation theologies are associated with Marxism (Congregation on the Doctrine of Faith, 1984). So, in order to convince those Catholics who would reject an argument from liberation theology, this paper will turn to the teaching of St. Thomas, “The Holy Doctor,” for the doctrine underlying much of CST.

To set the stage for my argument, the fact that exclusionary policies exist in many Catholic schools, whether just or not, has been established here and elsewhere. If the Catholic Church in the US has created schools that call themselves Catholic, how can they discriminate against children diagnosed

² It is important to note that this phrase is an artifact, and by no means characterizes the author’s view, nor should it be taken to characterize the Church’s view on those diagnosed with special needs.

with special needs and remain true to Catholic social teaching, which supports the dignity of each person? In the existing literature, administrators' most commonly stated reasons for not offering inclusive services deal with lack of funding for teacher training, hiring personnel and modifying space (Durow, 2007). If the Church is called, by the principles of CST, to follow the radically inclusive teachings of Jesus, and does not, largely on the claim that there is not enough money, can that failure to include all be justified?

A Brief Exploration of Thomistic Doctrines Applied to Inclusive Programs in Catholic Schools

In some ways, it may be a fool's errand to try to answer the question WWTD? (What would Thomas do?) in an age so far removed from his. However, in a Church that has the history--and the credence--to keep constant its underlying principles while reinterpreting them in light of "signs of the times," educated Catholics should be able to find shared meanings upon which reasonable people could agree. Just as in any exegesis, this one could be accused of either "cherry-picking" or using only obscure teachings of St. Thomas to fit this particular argument. And, while there may be some truth to the cherry-picking argument, an effort has been made to use his thoughts on theology that are either: agreed upon (e.g., the two great commandments), recently discussed in the literature (e.g., the common good, rightful sharing of goods) or strongly associated with him (e.g., love is an act of the will). Thomas' writing on the greatest commandments (to love God and neighbor) from his sermon "On Perfection of the Spiritual Life" provide a good starting point:

There are two precepts of charity, one pertaining to the love of God, the other to loving our neighbor. These two precepts are mutually related, according to the order of charity... After God, we are obliged by charity to love our neighbor, to whom we are bound by special social ties, due to our common vocation to happiness. What charity obliges us to love in our neighbor is this: that together we may attain to happiness. (Clark, 1972, p. 501)

In this short passage, themes common to both Aristotelian/Thomistic philosophy and Catholic social teaching are apparent. Thomas repeats Jesus' teaching on the two commandments that must be obeyed above all others:

love of God and of neighbor. The love of God is inexorably bound up with love of neighbor, whom people must love as themselves. Those who believe in God are bound together in communion and community while here on earth. If people love God they will act charitably towards their neighbors, and seek their neighbors' happiness as they do their own. But what does Aquinas mean by a "common vocation to happiness"?

Happiness here doesn't refer to a fleeting feel-good-ism, but rather to what Aristotle, in his work *Nicomachean Ethics*, called *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, trans. 1999), or what is often translated as human flourishing. Until the final bliss in union with God is attained, one must be devoted to the happiness, or fullest flourishing, of neighbors. This notion of happiness is also reflected in the second theme of CST, the allowance for full participation of people in their various communities (spiritual, social, political) to allow them to fulfill their vocation of happiness, to become their best possible selves, or to flourish. The application to inclusion here lies in Aquinas's reminder of the responsibility to support the full flourishing of all. Thus, if what we supporters of Catholic education believe to be the best type of education is available to some children to help them to become their best selves, should not participation be open to all?

Thus far, in the love of God and neighbor, Aquinas and CST bind us, as Catholics, together on the journey to seek happiness (which has been defined as flourishing), and may call Catholic educators to offer participation in inclusive services. But, while it is clear what should be sought for self and neighbor, how should one seek it? In his interpretation of the command to love one's neighbor, what might Thomas mean by love? Often, in thinking of love, many think of "falling in love," as in the seemingly effortless "young love" or "mother-love" which may occur without conscious effort. How does one come to love a neighbor as her/himself? In one of Thomas' most profound teachings, he turns the idea of "falling" in love on its head, and teaches that often it may have to be a purposeful act. In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas writes that love is not always a natural occurrence, but that *love is an act of the will*:

And so love is naturally the first act of the will and of tendency, and therefore all other tending motions presuppose love as their source and root. (Aquinas, as cited in Clark, 1972, p. 159)

And whenever anyone loves another he³ wills good to that other. In this way he is identifying the other with himself and considering the good done to that other as done to himself. Love then is a uniting force, since it joins the other to ourselves and relates his good to our own. And likewise the divine love is a uniting force because God wills good to others; (Aquinas, as cited in Clark, 1972, pp.159-60).

Love here seems to mean willing to another all the good that God would will to us, and that we would will to ourselves and our families. Those who come from an education or psychology background might relate this to the humanistic concept of unconditional positive regard. This will to regard children with dignity, this will to love them, means loving children on days when they are not even likable, continually reminding oneself to be guided by wanting what is best for them. Mother Teresa taught her sisters to see the face of Christ in everyone--therefore making them mindful that they should will the best for each human being. This echoes the first theme of CST, to recognize the divine image in each person, and treat each in a dignified manner. In making the case to offer special educational services in Catholic schools, I ask: if Catholic educators are willing themselves to love each person, to see the reflection of divinity in each person, then can schools that exclude those most in need be called Catholic?

Thus far, the writings of Aquinas have been supportive of the first two themes of Catholic social teaching, which apply to offering inclusive services in Catholic schools; the right to be treated with dignity, and the right to full participation. The quotations used are interpreted here to say that in following the two great commandments (loving God and neighbor), Catholics are bound together in seeking our own and our neighbors' happiness, or flourishing. The journey to seek *eudaimonia* together is enabled by love, which is an act of willing the best for each person.

Several concerns might arise at this point from the reader. Thomas was writing in the 1200s when schooling was not widespread among children *without* what are today called exceptionalities, much less for those *with* exceptional needs, so any opinion derived here is certainly extrapolation. Even if his thought would appear to side with inclusion as being the right thing to offer to students with exceptional needs, would it be good for children

3 Any instances of non-inclusive language found in this article are reproduced from the original text(s) and are not the preferred word choice of the Author or the Editors of the *Journal of Catholic Education*.

without special needs—or would it harm *their* ability to become their best possible selves? Couldn't Catholic schools, in good conscience, continue to educate children without special needs through Catholic education, (which is offered in the belief that it will bring children to their fullest human flourishing), and assign children with special needs, for the good of the majority, to public schools which are legally bound to educate them and have existing programs? Here it becomes necessary to address the issues of individual human flourishing, the basic rights of all to goods and services, and the common good.

Before turning to Thomas to address those issues, it is necessary to look to science to help answer the question of whether other children in Catholic schools will come to harm, or at least be prevented from reaching their full human vocation, if exceptional children take up time and resources that would otherwise go to them. This is not an unreasonable question to ask, and research helps to answer it, at least partially. The overwhelming body of research on inclusion thus far indicates that, overall, inclusion is *at least* not harmful, and in many cases is a positive experience for ALL students, whether or not they are diagnosed as having special needs (Salend & Duhaney, 1999; Staub, 2005). In fact, Frattura and Capper (2007) wrote that "Research suggests that educating students in...general education environments results in higher academic achievement and more positive social outcomes for students with and without disability labels" (p. 7). As encouraging as they may seem, these research findings do not answer administrators' concerns of where to find the funds to provide special education services, training, or personnel. However, it does remove the question of whether both the individual and common good are met through inclusive practices. Since in the access to full participation, there is little likelihood of harm to the common good of students, the next theme warranting exploration is Aquinas's teaching on the distribution of goods and services:

What belongs to human law cannot abrogate what is required by natural law or divine law. The natural order is founded by divine providence; material things are ordered to the alleviation of human needs. Therefore, the division of ownership of things that proceed from human law must not interfere with the alleviation of human needs by those things. Likewise, whatever a man has in superabundance is owed of natural right to the poor for their sustenance...Because there are many who suffer need, and because they cannot all be assisted from the same source, it is

entrusted to the will of the individuals to provide from their own wealth assistance to those suffering need. If, however, there is such an urgent and obvious need that there is clearly an immediate emergency for sustenance, as when any person is immediately endangered without means of alleviation, then he may legitimately take from another person's goods what he needs, either openly or secretly. Nor is this, strictly speaking, fraud or robbery (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.66, a.7.c).

This is a rather long segment, and will require some exploration. The first three sentences are unequivocal: human law cannot rescind what is divinely ordered, and in the divine order, material things are meant to be used for the alleviation of human need and suffering for all. In other words, conscience cannot allow for responsibility to love one's neighbors by providing for their needs to be over-ridden by the fact that human law does not enforce that responsibility. In the case of Catholic schools, then, the moral requirement to serve the broadest spectrum of children possible cannot be negated simply because human law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, or IDEIA, 2004) does not compel private schools to provide services to children with special needs. The next sentence from the quoted passage above, saying that wherever there exists a "superabundance" of something, those goods must be shared, might be problematic in making the moral case for inclusion. Do Catholic schools have a superabundance from which they must share? Far from having a superabundance, some Catholic schools struggle to keep their doors open--indeed, many have closed (Cruz, 2009)--while others have fared well either because of their location in wealthier areas, or because of state programs that allow funding to follow students into private schools (Anderson, 2012). The problem here seems to be both in a definition of superabundance, and beliefs about who "owns" whatever abundance is to be shared.⁴

Examining both the overall tone and the remaining three sentences of the quoted passage may aid readers' understanding. The challenge here is to change one's way of thinking. As Catholics, we are called to be in both community and communion with one another; Thomas Aquinas calls us to that community here, through the tone of this passage, in a particularly radical and egalitarian way. Not only are we our brothers' keepers, but our brother or sister may rise up and steal from us what is necessary to human flourishing if we do not offer it—and in such a case, it is not even considered stealing!⁵

Examined in this way, funding for Catholic schools does not only be-

long to enrolled families and/or the parishes funding the schools, but to all children whose families believe that their human vocation would best be achieved through Catholic education. It seems especially cruel that there are families who, through their parishes, support Catholic schools that their children cannot attend because of their disabilities. Whether what a community has is need, abundance, or superabundance, it is to be shared by all.

The idea of sharing the bounty (or the burden) equally would seem to be affirmed in Aquinas's writing regarding the common good: "Consider now the fact that right reason points out that the common good must be preferred to private advantage and that each part of a whole is by nature dedicated to the good of the whole" (as cited in Clark, 1972, p. 283). What does Aquinas mean by "the common good?" Entire books have been written on this subject, so I can only allude here to a basic definition grounded in Catholic doctrine. The seven basic themes of CST noted earlier are all elements of the common good; reading them gives one a picture of the society (and, perhaps, of the Kingdom of Heaven) that would be achieved through working for it. The common good is achieved by loving God and neighbor throughout the shared human journey toward full human flourishing and eventual fulfillment in unity with God. Therefore, it is important to practice virtues that lead to seeking what is in the common good and shunning what is evil; in other words, seeking that which promotes *eudaimonia* for the many over the "private advantage" of the few.

Having made a case here that the common good is achieved only when goods are shared, another concern for the modern reader regarding Aquinas's intentions might arise. Since he indicated that humans must use all *things* in common, was he referring only to physical goods, such as food and shelter,

4 I do not wish to cast Catholic schools as greedy, selfish or rich. The two Catholic schools at which I taught were institutions that were run, in excellent fashion, on a shoestring, by a mission-driven, talented, and underpaid faculty and staff. In fact, according to neighborhood demographics, both schools "over-served" both poor children and children of color. Alas, the children whom we did not serve were those diagnosed with exceptional needs, for the very reason given earlier in this paper—no funds for staff training or program development—to my great regret.

5 Pope Leo the XIII used this teaching in his ground-breaking 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Translated as "About New Things", or "About Revolution") in which he addressed the conditions of the working masses as being little better than slavery. He warned the wealthy that if they did not give the poor what was needed for a decent standard of living that the poor would rise up with the Marxists and take what was theirs.

rather than services, such as education? That might be a reasonable interpretation of common thought in his time. However, in the same sermon (“On Perfection,” quoted in the paragraph above) Aquinas writes about the three degrees of perfection that should be aspirations of brotherly love.

The first degree of perfection lies in performing corporal works of mercy—meeting the bodily needs of others as if one was meeting the needs of Jesus. “For the greater the goods we bestow on our neighbor, the greater the love” (Clark, 1972, p. 288). This plainly requires goods, and might entail service as well (as in Aquinas’s reference here to the final judgment in Matt., 25; 31–46). The second degree of perfection requires meeting the spiritual needs of people but on the “natural plane” (Clark, 1972, p. 288). This would be rightly characterized as service, as Aquinas actually gives the example of “teaching the ignorant” (Clark, 1972, p. 288). The third and highest degree of perfection in brotherly love is found in those “who bestow spiritual and supernatural gifts upon their neighbor, such as teaching them about God and the things of God” (Clark, 1972, p. 289). Therefore, the extension of Aquinas’s admonition to give to each what is needed to live decently and to flourish beyond including material goods to also include services, such as education, is justified.

The purpose of this paper has been to reframe the way that those who run Catholic schools approach what can and cannot be offered to students. If the moral argument to offer inclusive services to children diagnosed with disabilities is accepted, many new questions arise. How inclusive can the services be? In other words, will all children be served, will most be served with the rest in public schools, or might there be a consortium or system of Catholic schools to offer a continuum of services? What are the practicalities, and what are the best practices? In other words, how would it work (Scanlan, 2009)? If the moral case to offer inclusive services is not accepted, are there any implications for those “choice” program schools that accept taxpayer money to cover part or all of a student’s Catholic education? If Catholic schools cannot serve all children, is Catholic schooling the most effective way to educate children in the faith and to help them become their best possible selves?

Possible Next Steps and New Questions for Research and Practice

As this article has demonstrated, many unanswered questions persist in discussions about how and whether all children with disabilities can be served in practice (rather than just in theory) alongside children without exceptionalities. While there is a strong movement in public schools for fully

including children with disabilities for most or all of the day,⁶ there needs to be more exploration of how this would work in Catholic schools, which face numerous barriers to implementing new models for inclusion. The most common barrier to special educational services cited by administrators is funding for additional teachers, aides, therapists, renovation for accessibility, and equipment, including technology, (Scanlan, 2008, Durow, 2007, Bello, 2006) while one of the major barriers reported by teachers is lack of training (Durow, 2007, McDonald, 2008). Durow (2007) summed up the main barriers to offering special educational services in Catholic schools as inadequate funding, inaccessible buildings, insufficient teacher preparation and confidence, and as a part of the problem that was addressed in this paper, “inconsistent commitment from parishes and boards” (p. 487).

The question of funding, while not solved by any stretch of the imagination, has seen a number of partial solutions proposed. Catholic schools have funded special educational services through tuition, donations, grants, and federal funds (Bello, 2006). Parents have borne the brunt of fundraising in some cases, either by paying extra tuition to cover the cost of services (Chandler, 2010) which seems antithetical to CST, or through formation of parents’ groups around the country (i.e. FIRE in Kansas, Exceptional Catholic in Minnesota, and the Catholic Coalition for Special Education in Maryland) which have raised both funds and awareness. Several authors have done in-depth research on the legal requirements and the use of federal, state and local funding afforded to private (including Catholic) schools under IDEA/IDEIA 2004, and the (Vocational) Rehabilitation Act of 1973. None of the proposed solutions would fully fund special educational services for students except those with mildly to moderately handicapping conditions⁷ —but, even that would be a start. Scanlan (2009), the NCEA (Q&A on Serving Children with Disabilities, 2011), and others have elaborated which services are eligible for public funding through the above mentioned laws, and to what extent, but there needs to be further dissemination to decision-makers.

Catholic administrators report that, aside from money, they need a blue-

6 For an extensive step-by-step overhaul of public schooling from segregated to inclusive special educational services, see Fraturra & Capper (2007), *Leading for social justice: Transforming schools for all learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

7 Scholarly and legal definitions refer to students as having disabilities, handicapping conditions, and special or exceptional needs interchangeably, as is the case here. These terms refer to students who have been diagnosed with a need that requires more services than are normally afforded to children in order to be successful in school (Turnbull et al, 2006).

print for how to include children with special needs (Scanlan, 2009). While there may be a perception that there is a dearth of material available on programming, there are actually a fair number of books and articles which propose models that Catholic schools might (and do) use to offer services to students diagnosed with disabilities. They could be gathered into five broad categories:

1. *Consultant* models (Scanlan, 2008; Durow, 2007) in which Catholic schools would take advantage of consultant services offered to teachers in private schools serving children with IEP's (funded by IDEA), or children with 504 plans⁸ (funded by the Rehabilitation Act) and/or schools might hire consultants with their own funds;
2. *Collaboration* models (DeFiore, 2006; Russo et al., 2002), in which Catholic schools would band together to offer services of one type at each school (i.e. for students with learning disabilities at one school, services for children with cognitive delays at another);
3. *Teacher's Aide/Tutor models* (Crowley & Shawn, 2007; Durow, 2007) that use teacher's aides or tutors trained to work individually with children diagnosed with special needs;
4. *Resource Room models* (DeFiore, 2006; Durow, 2007) that follow the public school resource room model of hiring licensed special educators, usually involving finding some funding through proportionate set-asides from IDEA; or,
5. *Retraining models* (MacDonald, 2008; Scanlan 2009; Storz & Nestor, 2007) that are based upon retraining staff to be radically inclusive through methods such as universal design and/or patterned after the program known through IDEA as Response to Intervention, or RtI.⁹ This type of model usually requires grant money to provide the extensive training needed.¹⁰

8 504 plans are part of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, and are meant to make education accessible to all students. At the request of the parents or the school, the local school district can help to develop a plan for "reasonable" modifications to curriculum, instruction and facilities, which are less extensive than those required by IDEA.

9 RtI is a pre-referral process designed so that fewer children will be diagnosed with exceptionalities and to help more children have their needs met in the regular classroom. There are three progressively more intensive "tiers" which use research proven strategies tailored to specific children or children who fit a particular learning profile. (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2013)

10 This type of model is the one most strongly defended by proponents of CST (Scanlan, 2009), who believe that most pull out models are antithetical to the tenets of CST.

Each model has strengths and weaknesses, and while most do not easily offer solutions to the funding problem, they do provide a body of theoretical blueprints, and in some cases, actual working reports from the field (Durow, 2007; Crowley, 2007), which would provide a choice of ways to successfully include children with special needs. There is also a wealth of practitioner literature from special education practice in public schools (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2013; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006), which could be applied either directly or indirectly.

Conclusion

The reader may be left feeling there are more questions raised than answered here. However, the first step *must* be an embrace of the idea that our schools should look like the Kingdom of Heaven. The teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas cited here and the seven basic tenets of Catholic social teaching both strongly support a moral mandate for offering inclusive services in Catholic schools. The teachings of Aquinas and CST would lead Catholic educators, by picturing those with whom Jesus chose to associate while on earth, to envision our Catholic schools populated with those who others might consider outcasts, those who He loved—a group of people that would certainly include children with special needs.

Now, just as with building the Kingdom of Heaven, all we have to do is make it happen.

References

- Anderson, J. (2012, August 19). To survive, a Catholic school retools for a wealthier market. *The New York Times*, p. A1.
- Aristotle. (1999). *Nicomachean ethics*. (2nd ed., T. H. Irwin, Trans.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.
- Aud, S., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Kristapovich, P., Rathbun, A., Wang, X., and Zhang, J. (2013). *The condition of education 2013* (NCES 2013-037). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013037.pdf>
- Bello, D.A. (2006). The status of special education services in Catholic high schools: Attributes, challenges and needs. *Exceptional Children*. 72(4), pp. 461-481. doi: [10.1177/001440290607200405](https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290607200405)
- Brady, B. V. (2008). *Essential Catholic social thought*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Publishing
- Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G. and Williams, J.M. (2003). *The craft of research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

- Clark, M. T. (1972). *An Aquinas reader: Selections from the writings of Thomas Aquinas*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Image Books.
- Chandler, M. A. (2010, February 23). One faith, one school. *The Washington Post*.
- Congregation on the Doctrine of Faith. (1984). Instruction on certain aspects of the "Theology of Liberation." Retrieved from the Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html
- Crowley, A. L. W., & Shawn, S. (2007). Supporting children with disabilities in the Catholic schools. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 10(4), 508-523.
- Cruz, G. (2009, October 12). Looking for solutions to the Catholic school crisis. *Time Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1929589,00.html>
- DeFiore, L. (2006). The state of education in Catholic schools. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 9(4), 453-465.
- Durow, W. P. (2007). Including and serving students with special needs in Catholic schools: A report of practices. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice*, 10(4), 473-489.
- Fraturo, E. M., & Capper, C. A. (2007). *Leading for social justice: Transforming schools for all learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- McDonald, A. T. (2008). *An exploration of primary level special education practices in the Catholic elementary school*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations & Theses Database (UMI No. 3345280)
- National Catholic Education Association. (2011). *Q & A on serving children with disabilities*. Washington, D.C.: NCEA
- Paul VI. (1965). *Gaudium et spes*: Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii
- Paul VI. (1971). *Octogesima adveniens: Apostolic letter of Pope Paul VI*. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_letters
- Russo, C.J., Massucci, J.D., Osborne, A.G. & Cattaro, G.M. (2002). *Catholic schools and the law of special education: A reference guide*. Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Education Association (NCEA).
- Salend, S. J., & Duhaney, L. M., (1999). The impact of inclusion on students with and without disabilities and their educators. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(2), 114-126. doi: [10.1177/074193259902000209](https://doi.org/10.1177/074193259902000209)
- Scanlan, M. K. (2008). The grammar of Catholic schooling and radically "Catholic" schools. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*. 12(1), 25-54.
- Scanlan, M. K. (2009). *All are welcome: Inclusive service delivery in Catholic schools*. Notre Dame, IN: Alliance for Catholic Education Press.
- Staub, D. (2005). *Inclusion and the other kids: Here's what research shows so far about inclusion's effect on nondisabled students*. Tempe, AZ: National Institute for Urban School Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.urbanschools.org/pdf/OP_Kids.pdf
- Storz, M. G., & Nestor, K. R. (2007). *They call us to justice: Responding to the call of the Church and our students*. Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Education Association.
- Tomlinson, C.A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: Pearson Publishing.

- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012). *Digest of education statistics, 2011* (NCES 2012-001).
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). (2013). Seven themes of Catholic social teaching. Retrieved from <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). (1978/1995) *Guidelines for celebration of sacraments with persons with disabilities*. Retrieved from <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/upload/guidelines-for-sacraments-disabilities.pdf>
- Vaughn, S., Bos, C., & Schumm, J. (2013). *Teaching students who are exceptional, diverse and at risk in the general education classroom*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Mary Carlson is a clinical assistant professor in Marquette University's College of Education. She began her career as a special education teacher, where her heart remains. She supervises pre-service teachers and teaches a sequence of classes centering on child and adolescent development, culturally responsive teaching, differentiation for and inclusion of students with special needs and effective teaching practices for diverse and at-risk students. Mary is currently pursuing an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. at Marquette in Theology, Philosophy and Special Education incorporating Liberation Theology for Disabilities. She can be reached at: mary.carlson@marquette.edu